



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

David B Banning
Aviation Accident Investigator
Alaskan Region

Date: June 30, 2013
Person Contacted: Bob Ellenberg
NTSB Accident Number: ANC13FA058

Narrative:

Mr. Bob Ellenberg is the brother of John Ellenberg a passenger seated in the right hand seat of a Beech Baron that crashed near Cantwell, AK on 6/28/2013.

During a telephone conversation on June 30, 2013, Mr. Ellenberg stated the following:

His brother (John) had been a pilot for about 40 years, was 74 years old, in good health and an active pilot. He owned 3 or 4 aircraft, was very safety conscious, and held A & P mechanic certificate, in addition to his commercial pilot certificate. During his retirement years he had brokered aircraft.

He had sold (brokered) an aircraft for Dale Hemman, Dale was unable to pick it up so he asked John to deliver it to Washington State and in exchange he offered him, and his girlfriend a seat in his airplane on an upcoming tour of Alaska.

He informed him that he owned a company that led flying tours from Washington State, throughout Alaska. He had a couple of pilots that served as group leaders and he flew lead to check weather.

On Thursday, 6/27/2013 John called his brother to see if his nephew (who lived in Alaska) was going to have time to meet with him. He asked his brother how things were going and John said not well. He said that Dale was obnoxious, arrogant, and abrasive and was way too risky in his flying. He said that he (Dale) was undergoing treatment for cancer was extremely obese and could not fit in the airplane. He said he gets down right on the treetops, through passes that are way to narrow.

He stated that the group leaders were not as experienced as he had been told. One leader had never flown the trip before and the other had only flown it once. People in the tour were complaining that they had to slow down for a Cessna 172 that was not as fast as the other airplanes, and the pilot of the 172 was considering quitting the tour as he had landed on one leg with only 5 gallons of fuel remaining. He also stated that Dale wanted the group to fly in formation about 5 feet off each other's wing tips.

John stated that he was in the right seat, and Dale was seated in the left seat and operating as PIC. He was so obese he could only fit in the left seat.

His brother told him to just jump on a commercial airplane and come home. John stated that he was flying with one hand lightly on the controls and thought he would be alright.

END



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

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Aviation Accident Investigator
Alaskan Region

Date: July 1, 2013
Person Contacted: Dick Smith
NTSB Accident Number: ANC13FA058

Narrative:

Mr. Smith is a group leader (lead pilot) for Lets Fly Alaska, a tour based company that leads pilots on a tour of Alaska. The participants provide their own airplanes and are led from Washington State through Canada and Alaska. During June-July 2013 Mr. Smith was the lead pilot for the “slow” group of airplanes.

During a telephone conversation on July 1, 2013, Mr. Smith stated the following:

He was not sure if Dale was seated in the left seat on the morning of the accident flight. He stated that he was not close enough to see.

He stated that John Ellenberg was qualified in the airplane and a flight instructor. John was the broker for the airplane and had represented the former owner. He delivered the airplane from Atlanta to St. Louis where Dale had planned on having a TKS system installed.

The morning of the accident, Dale had departed first followed by the fast (Vic’s) group, with his group schedule to depart at approximately 1010.

They had an internal radio frequency that they monitored, he heard Vic’s group landing at Healy River and landed his group there also.

He stated that Vic somehow got word that the Baron was down and after 45 min to an hour at Healy River he departed to take a look. Just before Summit he turned around, he stated that there was no way to get through the pass, with thick clouds to the ground and 200 – 300 feet between layers.

END



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

David B Banning
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Alaskan Region

Date: July 1, 2013
Person Contacted: Vic Syracuse
NTSB Accident Number: ANC13FA058

Narrative:

Mr. Vic Syracuse is a group leader (lead pilot) for Lets Fly Alaska, a tour based company that leads pilots on a tour of Alaska. The participants provide their own airplanes and are led from Washington State through Canada and Alaska. During June-July 2013 Mr. Syracuse was the lead pilot for the “fast” group of airplanes.

During a telephone conversation on July, 2013, Mr. Syracuse stated the following:

This was his first time as a group leader for “Let’s Fly Alaska”.

He and his wife had originally been invited to ride with Dale Hemman (accident pilot) in the Baron. He had declined, he said he had observed Dale push weather in the past, and would not fly with him. He told Dale he would go as a group leader in his own airplane.

He was not sure if Dale was seated in the left seat on the morning of the accident flight. Dale had been in the left seat of every other leg, and had told members of the group that he could not fit in the right seat.

When asked who was PIC he said it was not clear and “confusing to us”.

He also stated that Dale was so big, with him seated in the left seat you could not access all the controls that a PIC would normally access.

He stated that as his group was taxiing for departure, he observed the Baron break ground, and Dale was approximately 10 minutes in front of his group.

He said that as he approached Healy River he didn't like the looks of the weather, he broadcast in the blind and a stationair replied saying that you couldn't get through the pass.

He elected to land his group at Healy River.

He stated that there was friction between Dale and John and they were not getting along.

After landing in Whitehorse, Canada John had approached Vic and told him he was at a loss. Dale had fallen asleep and when he woke up they were headed at a hill, John was uncomfortable with the altitude of the airplane and said something to Dale, who told John don't you tell me how to fly my (expletive) airplane. He said if the gear had been down they would have it the hill, and Dale flew the rest of the leg about 30 feet above the terrain. He said that Dale was scaring him.

Vic said he told John he needed to exercise his privileges as PIC. He said that John looked at him as if he didn't understand what he was talking about.

He also stated that he and his wife were having breakfast with Dale one morning during the tour and Dale made the comment that he had only taken 20 milligrams Prednisone and "John doesn't know I need a minder".

Looking back it was his personal opinion that Dale was acting as PIC, but had John in the cockpit to meet the legal requirements of PIC but had never informed John he was PIC or relinquished the duties of PIC.

He also stated that the night before the accident the group had dinner together with John and Dale in close proximity and everyone seemed to be getting along and enjoying themselves.

END



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

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Alaskan Region

Date: August 7, 2014
Person Contacted: Mr. Doug Glenn
NTSB Accident Number: ANC13FA058

Narrative:

Mr. Glenn, a pilot was at the Summit Airport on June 28, 2013 about the time of the accident, when he observed a piston powered twin engine Beechcraft fly by the Summit Airport.

During a telephone conversation on August 7, 2014 Mr. Glenn stated the following:

He had been flying fuel out of the Summit, and was standing on the Summit Airport waiting on weather, when he observed a twin engine, piston powered, Beechcraft fly by at approximately ¼ mile. He stated that the airplane was about 400 feet above ground level (AGL) and flying in and out of the clouds. About an hour to an hour and fifteen minutes later he heard sirens.

He said the weather at the Summit airport was broken clouds at about 250 – 300 feet, overcast at about 350 feet, with thin wispy fog hanging in the trees.

END